LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG SPEECH

Delivered by Abraham Lincoln at the dedication of the National Cemetery on the site of the Battle of Gettysburg on November 19, 1863—50 years ago today.

Fourscore-and-seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our power to add or to detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced, It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN THOUGHT THAT HIS GETTYSBURG ADDRESS WAS A FAILURE

Fifty years ago two addresses were made at Gettysburg—at the consecration of the national cemetery there.

One was by the most cultured man in American public life. Himself the scion of a distinguished ancestry, he had received the utmost training of our most aristocratic university; had been a governor of the most intellectual of the New England states, an ambassador to Great Britain, a secretary of state, a senator of the United States.

Upon the preparation of his oration he had spent months of research and then had polished it until every phrase had become classic in form, every word precisely fitted to the expression of his thought.

Did you ever read the speech of Edward Everett? Did you ever know a person who has read it? If you should now become curious to read it would you know where to lay your hand upon it?

The other speech on that somber November day was made by a gaunt and homely man; the child of abject poverty, painfully self-taught. Pressed upon by relentless duties of the most difficult office in the world at the time of its greatest crisis, he had put off the preparation of it until aboard the train which was taking him to the historic site. And then, with a stumpy pencil, he had scribbled it, between train-jolts, on pieces of brown wrapping paper which a fellow-passenger—no less a personage than the haughty secretary of state, William H. Seward—had tossed away!

But who has not read, who has not been thrilled by, who does not know by heart, the immortal address of